



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: October 22, 2020

Agenda Item: Amelia Island WMA Addition, Region 7

Action Needed: Endorsement **Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 minutes

Background: FWP proposes a fee title addition of 155 acres adjacent to the existing Amelia Island Wildlife Management Area (WMA) located 1 mile north of Hysham. The primary benefit of this acquisition is to conserve and expand riparian habitat and increase public recreational opportunities in the Lower Yellowstone River Valley.

The majority of the Yellowstone River Valley has been converted to irrigated cropland. The addition of this property would conserve remaining Yellowstone River riparian habitat and allow natural river processes to restore riparian vegetation such as plains cottonwood, buffalo berry and sandbar willows. Under this proposal, FWP would incorporate this parcel into the existing WMA management plan, including actively expanding riparian and upland habitats. Some cropland would continue to be farmed as part of the existing WMA farming lease arrangement to enhance wildlife food and cover.

The addition of this property would broaden the conservation footprint of the existing Amelia Island WMA while also expanding public hunting for species such as white-tailed deer, ring-necked pheasants, and Canada geese, and other public outdoor recreational activities such as fishing, bird watching, and asparagus picking.

Public Involvement Process & Results: FWP has not sought formal public review of this proposal. Upon endorsement by the commission, FWP would conduct an initial public evaluation. Depending on the response, FWP may proceed further with an environmental analysis including additional public involvement and review.

Alternatives and Analysis: Proposal alternatives and analysis would be conducted by FWP if this proposal receives commission endorsement.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends the commission endorse this proposal. This would be a strategic addition to the WMA, supporting habitat conservation and offering an opportunity for additional habitat restoration and expanded public recreation.

Proposed Motion: I move the commission endorse the proposed Amelia Island WMA Addition, allowing FWP to conduct further due diligence, analysis, and public review.